

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Old Town San Diego community of The City of San Diego has outstanding historical importance. It is the site of initial **settlement** in the City and the birthplace of the State of **California**. The rich heritage of this community is of incalculable **value** to present and future generations.

There is a growing public and private awareness of the importance of Old Town San Diego, not only in terms of its obvious historical significance, but its potential as an historically **compatible** and vital **commercial** center, as **well**. Several attempts by government agencies, and individuals have been made to develop **plans** and provide methods whereby the rich historical past of Old Town San Diego may be preserved. The area is still in the process of redeveloping and establishing an **overall** appearance **reflective** of its **historical** background. Historic structures, many in need of restoration and repair, have been lost amidst **incompatible** or **architecturally** contrasting **commercial**, or residential developments. A profusion of oversized signs, **billboards** and **utility poles** still exist and distract from the **historical** emphasis considerations of the few remaining historic buildings and sites.

Until the passage of the Cameron-Unruh Beach, Park, Recreational and **Historical** Facilities Bond Act of 1964, and subsequent state legislative acts, an **overall** restoration of the historic **central** area of Old Town San Diego did not seem a real possibility. In 1966, the State Department of Parks and Recreation reported to the legislature that "...it is feasible to **establish** a historic unit of the State Park System at Old Town in San Diego." In proposing the historic park, it was the intention of the State to: "...make **available**, for all time, for the **enlightenment**, inspiration and enjoyment of all people, this old **village**, one of the first white settlements in the State, as it existed during the Mexican period, 1821 to 1846 and during the **following** American transitional period, 1846 to 1869; this to be a living, thriving **village** with the historic and recreational values inherent to the area and the period in time it represents."

In conjunction with the State report, The City and County of San Diego agreed to cooperate in several ways, including the provision of funds to assist the State in land acquisition for the Park and **establishment** of zoning regulations designed to assure compatible building designs to the historical context of the community.

Residents and merchants from the community have had a **long** standing interest in the area. In the Spring of 1966 interested residents, property owners, businessmen, historians and others joined efforts in their mutual concern for the future of Old Town San Diego. As a result, the Old Town San Diego Community **Planning** Committee was officially recognized by the City Council in June, 1966, as the group with which City staff **would** work

in jointly preparing a long-range physical **development** plan. Located in the approximate center of this area is a **10-acre** State Historic Park hereafter referred to as the historic core. Additionally, the County of San Diego, in conjunction with the City, developed Old Town San Diego Heritage Park, a park-like development which includes old, **relocated** heritage structures, primarily of Victorian vintage. The buildings are leased to private individuals for retail and office uses.

Two initial actions taken by the City Council reflect a long-term City-wide concern and interest in the historical area. The first, in December, 1965, was the establishment of the **City's** first Historical Site Board. This **Board's responsibility** is City-wide and focuses on **exploring** means for the protection, retention, and preservation of historic sites. Of major concern to the Board was, of course, the preservation of The Old Town San Diego Historic District. The major contribution to the **realization** of the full potentials of Old Town San Diego was the Board's efforts to establish a documented register of **all** historic sites, buildings and structures in the area. Their initial report covered **only** those **buildings** of the Mexican period that fronted on the Plaza and have become the core of the State Historic Park.

A second action by the City Council taken in September of 1966 established the Old Town San Diego Architectural Control District Ordinance and created an **Architectural Control** Board to administer the ordinance. Essentially this action recognized the area as having a unique distinctive character. The District imposed certain **architectural** restrictions on both new structures as well as the alteration or **relocation** of existing buildings. The Planned District Ordinance, together with the **establishment** of the State's Historic Park and the **County's** Heritage Park development, have consolidated the key components which make Old Town San Diego the community it is today.

City, County, and State Actions, coupled with the program pursued by the State creating a Historic park and later efforts in connection with the 200th Anniversary of the founding of Old Town San Diego (1969), were key to the successful implementation of the first long range development plan.

Since the original adoption of the Old Town San Diego Community Plan on November 26, 1968, major development primarily of a commercial nature has taken place in the community, with some residential development also occurring on the Mission Hills bluffs and **hillsides** in the eastern portion of the community.

The State park proposed in the 1968 plan was implemented when land was purchased by the State of California for that purpose. The resulting State Park boundaries were smaller than those earlier envisioned. Development of the State park has been primarily of a retail nature, catering **primarily** to the tourist visitor. Outside the State park area, office development has taken **place** during the **1970's** decade. Hotel uses have developed in the early **1980's** consistent with the economic market forces prevailing in the

area. With the exception of the State Historic Park area and the County's Heritage Park, much of the **development** in later years has been **drastically** out of scale with the historical precedent of the late 1800's, counter to what was originally envisioned by the earlier 1968 Community Plan.

This is the basic context in which the Old San Diego Task Force created by City Councilman Bill Cleator undertook the work of updating the Community Plan and Planned District Ordinance in 1984. The Old San Diego Task Force is made up of individuals presenting a variety of community and **regional** interests affecting the Old Town San Diego **Community**, the Task Force has held many meetings with representatives of the City. The major overriding **goal**, agreed to at the outset of the program was to preserve and enhance the historical significance of the area and create a **balanced** development in Old Town San Diego between community interests and regional visitor attractions.

The role of the Committee **involved** reviewing and analyzing background, **historical** and **development** factors of the area within and outside the historic core and study issues relative to land use, architectural-historical **development** design, parking and circulation, public agency involvement, marketing, economics and, business improvement, streetscape amenities, and **public** facilities. On this basis, the Task Force was able to **formulate** updated community goals and objectives. Planning Department and other City and public agency staff and consultants were hired to advise on the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID) and a program for streetscape design provided the necessary **technical** studies including the preparation of **alternative development** options were under consideration by the Task Force. The Task Force also maintained **liaison** with other groups **including** the Old San Diego Chamber of Commerce, the State Parks, the Historical Site Board, and the Old Town San Diego Planned District Review Board (Architectural Control Board). The Old Town Community Planning Group was **also** involved in the **development** of the document through Planning Department staff meetings and **briefings**.

This following Community Plan has evolved as a **result** of alternative development options considered the task force **subcommittees**. The Plan represents a **policy** framework that **will** enable the community and the City to work jointly on more specific planning studies and action programs. The Task Force and City staff recognize that in some instances more precise studies and development proposals must follow. Those are specifically identified later and in the **Implementation** Section of this Plan. The Old Town San Diego Community Plan, therefore, represents only an initial step in a planning program to attain a full **realization** of Old Town San Diego's **social**, economic, and historic values.

While the Plan sets forth several recommendations in regard to future implementation, it does not of itself contain or **establish** ordinances, codes or other legislative regulations. In order to carry out the **proposals** of the Plan and to realize community **goals** and objectives, the **community's** Planned District Ordinance providing zoning or other

development **controls** encouraging the **revitalization** of this area is **also** being updated and is being enacted **separately** through the appropriate legislative action. A business improvement program is **also** being processed concurrently in order to better coordinate the **community's** business and marketing activities. A streetscape and public **facilities** enhancement program is in the development stages and its completion **will follow** by a few months the completion and adoption of this plan. An implementation program for this study will follow.

The Old Town San Diego Community Plan is **basically** divided into five **elements: historical**, land use, circulation, public facilities, environment conservation, and implementation. Each **element** contains an introduction and summary of relevant planning factors, a statement of community goals and objectives and more specific plan **proposals**. Recognizing the unique aspects of this area. The Historical Element **includes** an abbreviated description of the **community's** past as it may **influence** plans for the future.

COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

The Old Town San Diego community contains **approximately** 230 acres and is bounded to the north by Interstate 8 and the Mission Valley Community Planning area. The **long** range development plan for Mission Valley was adopted by the San Diego City Council in **July, 1985**. The approved plan envisions a high density mixed use community. Its western area, which is contiguous with the Old Town San Diego plan, is projected to develop with **hotels** and open space to reflect the width of the San Diego River Floodplain.

The western boundary of Old Town San Diego is Interstate 5 and the Midway Community Planning area. The Midway Community Plan, originally adopted in 1970, is in the process of being updated and is projected to be developed as a mixed use community. **Presently**, the area closest to Old Town San Diego is low intensity **commercial** and auto-oriented, which **allows** for substantial future growth opportunity.

The south and east boundary of Old Town San Diego is bounded by the Uptown/Mission Hills hillsides. The Uptown Community Plan area is adjacent to this boundary. The Uptown Plan originally adopted by the City Council in 1975, is in the process of being updated at this time. Uptown is planned as a **primarily** residential community with supportive commercial uses. The area adjacent to Old Town San Diego is primarily **single** family in character.

